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#18
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JIM SINCLAIR • RONDA PATTISON
THE MAXX
maxximized

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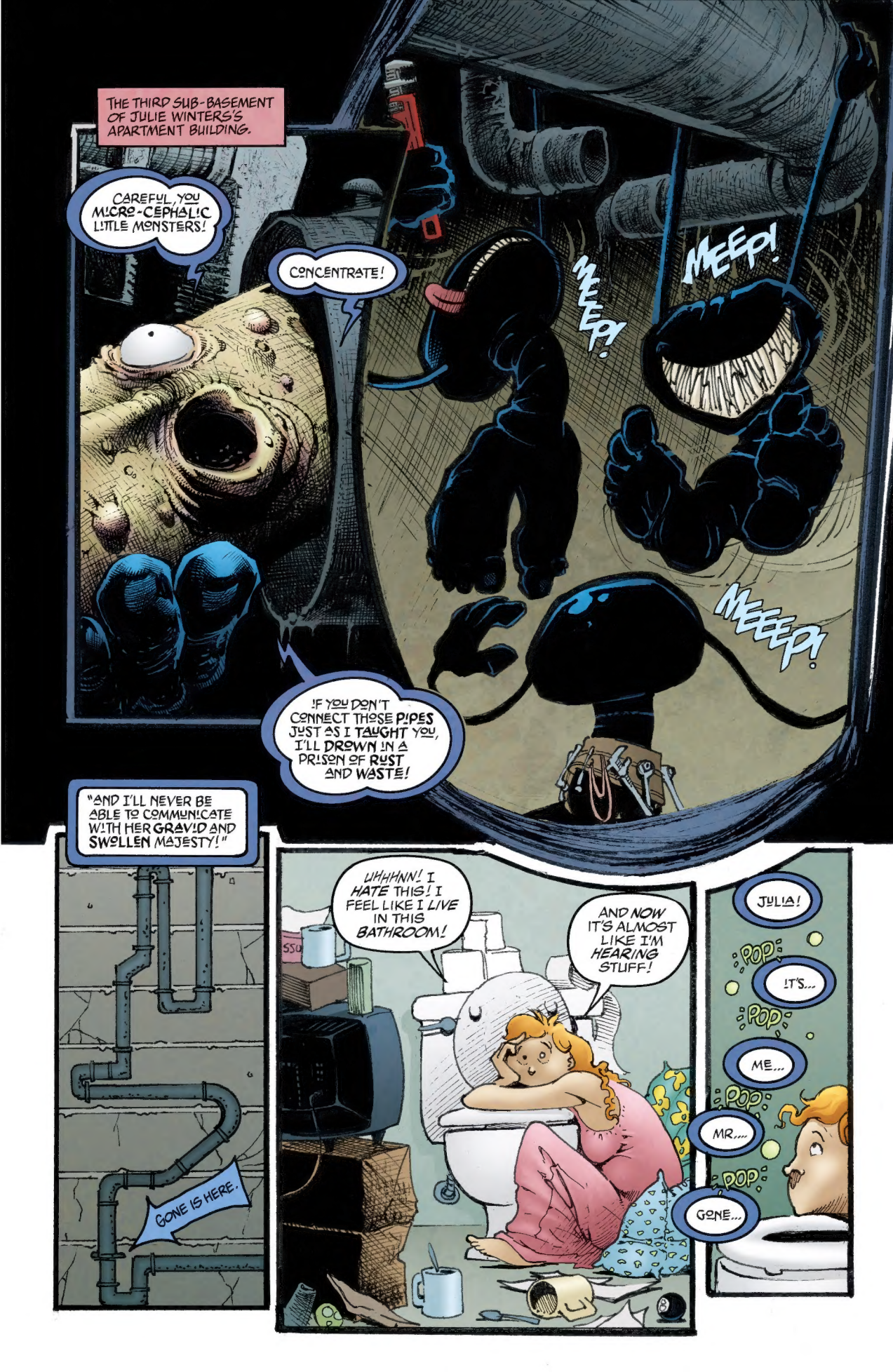
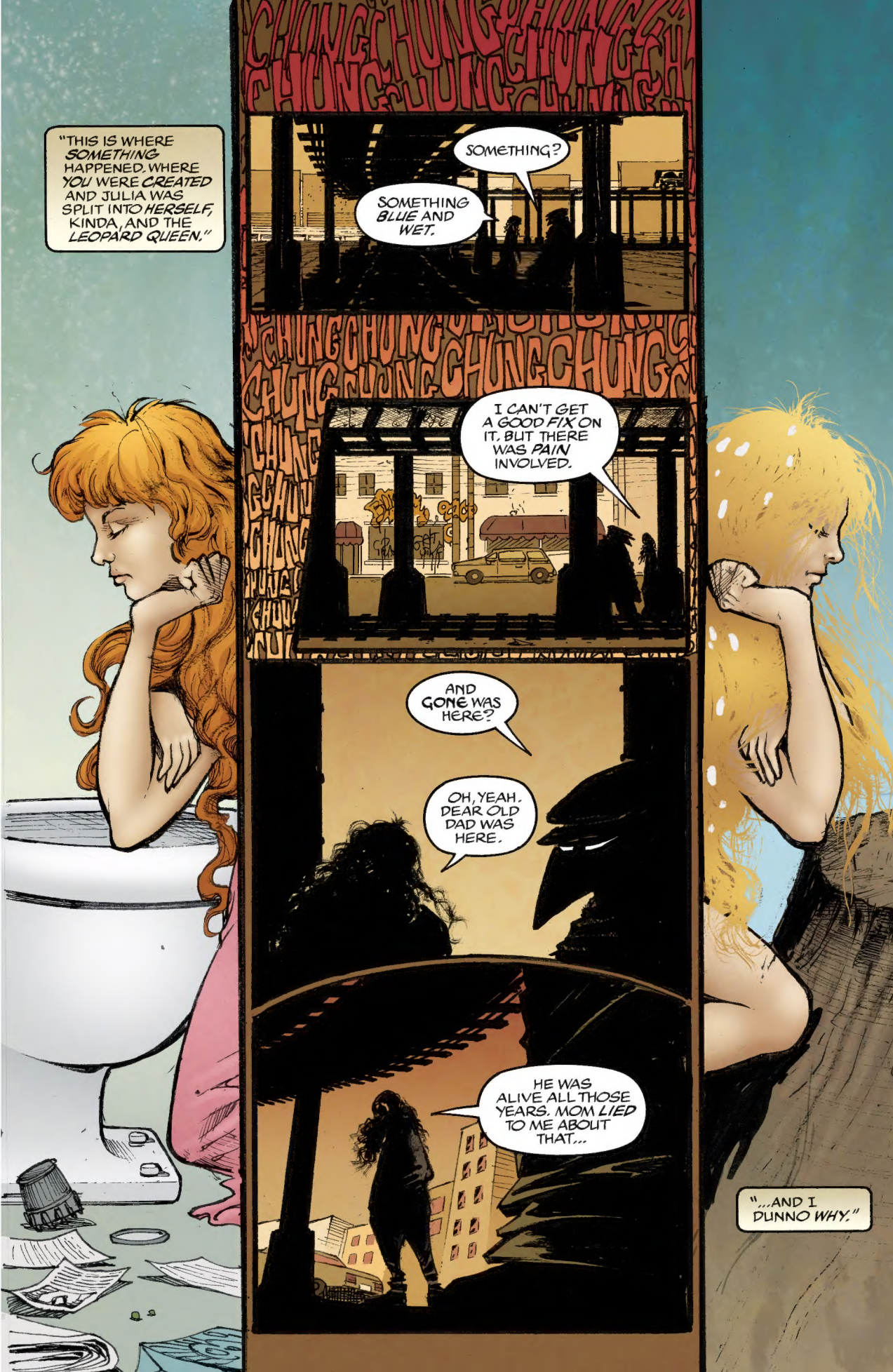
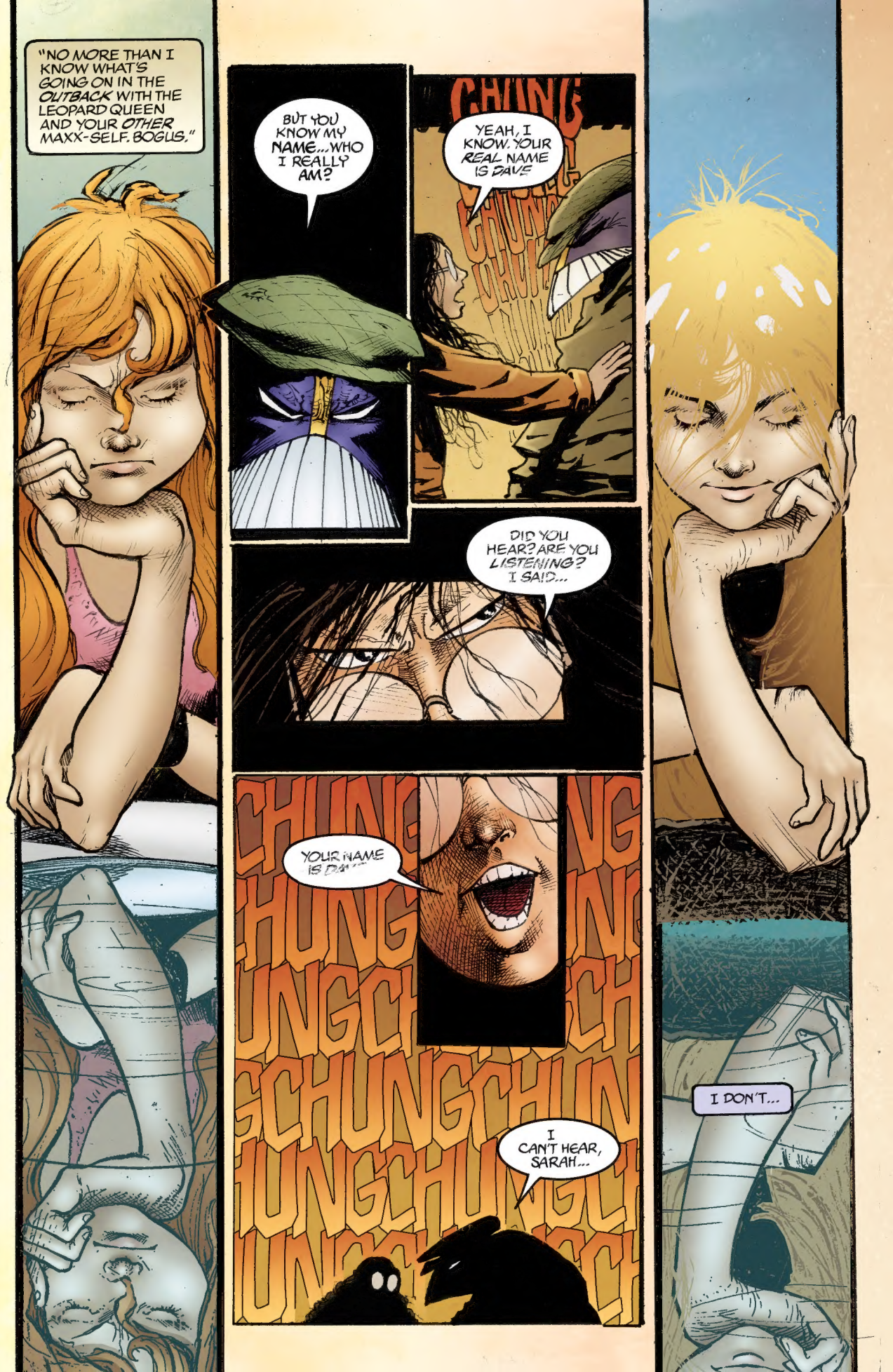
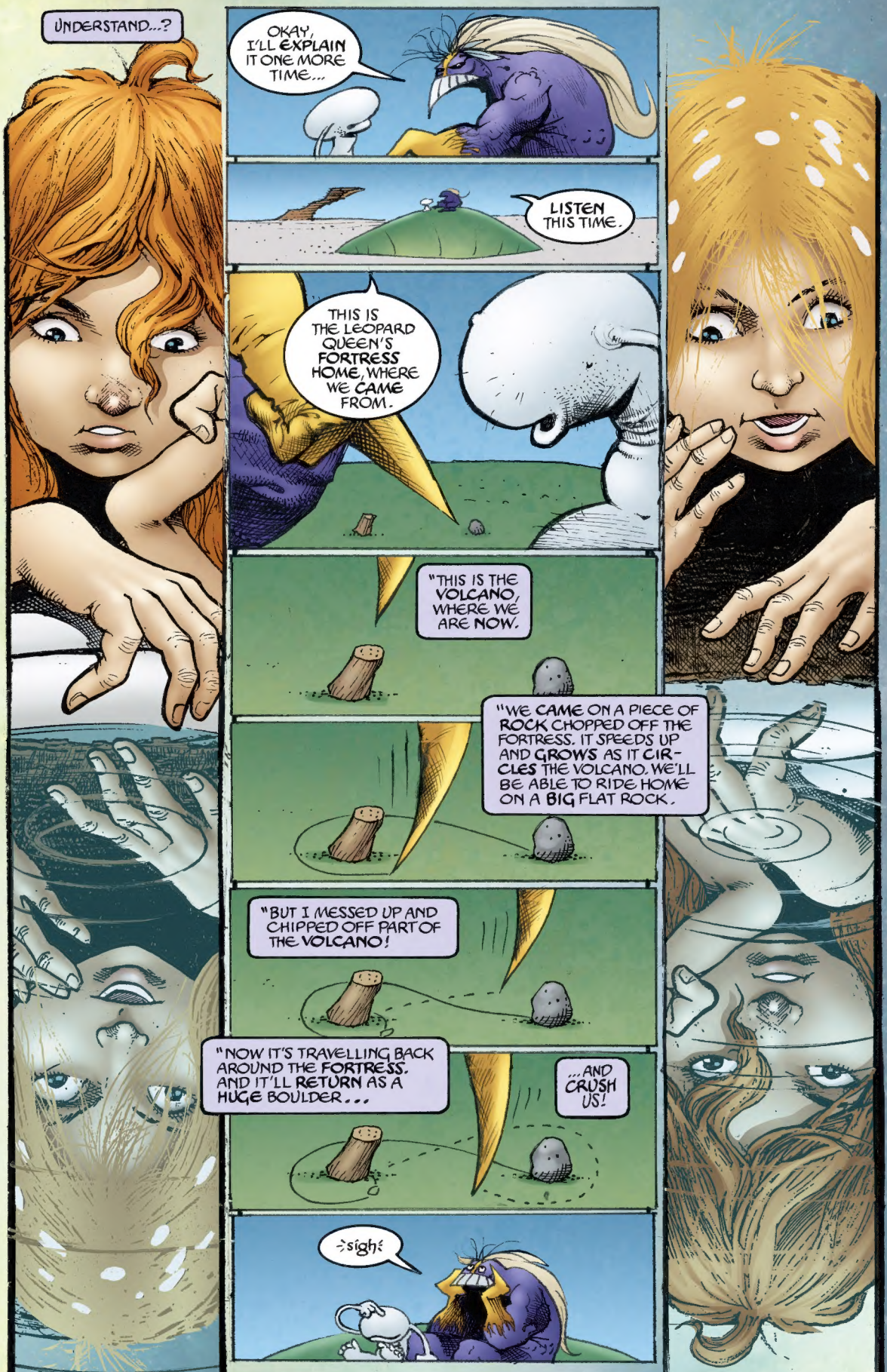
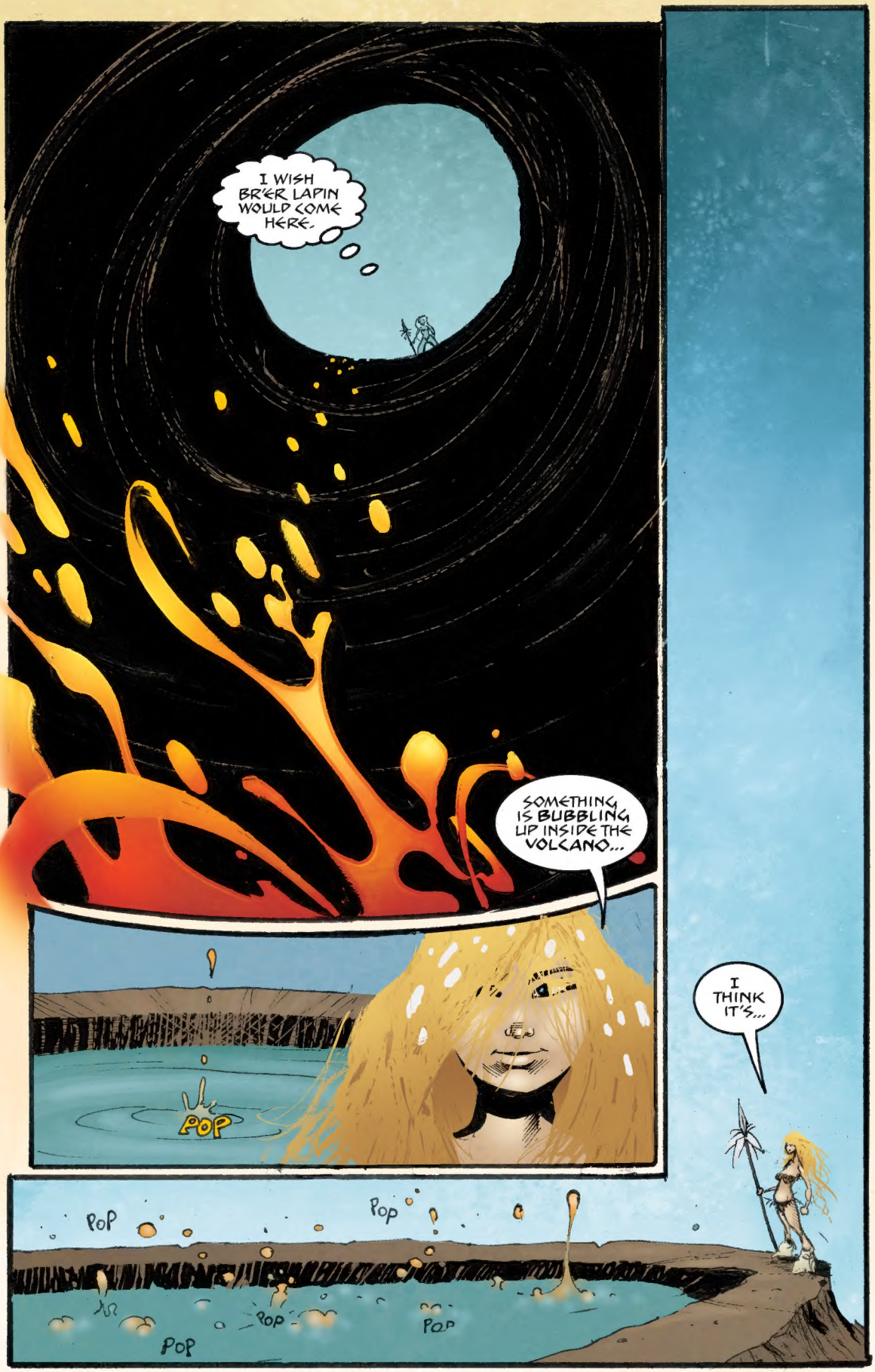

THE THIRD SUB-BASEMENT OF JULIE WINTERS'S APARTMENT BUILDING.
CAREFUL, YOU MICRO-CEPHALIC LITTLE MONSTERS!
CONCENTRATE!
MEEP!
MEEP!
MEEEP!
IF YOU DON'T CONNECT THOSE PIPES JUST AS I TAUGHT YOU, I'LL DROWN IN A PRISON OF RUST AND WASTE!
"AND I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH HER GRAVID AND SWOLLEN MAJESTY!"
GONE IS HERE.
UHHHNN! I HATE THIS! I FEEL LIKE I LIVE IN THIS BATHROOM!
AND NOW IT'S ALMOST LIKE I'M HEARING STUFF!
JULIA!
POP
IT'S...
POP
ME...
POP
MR....
POP
GONE...

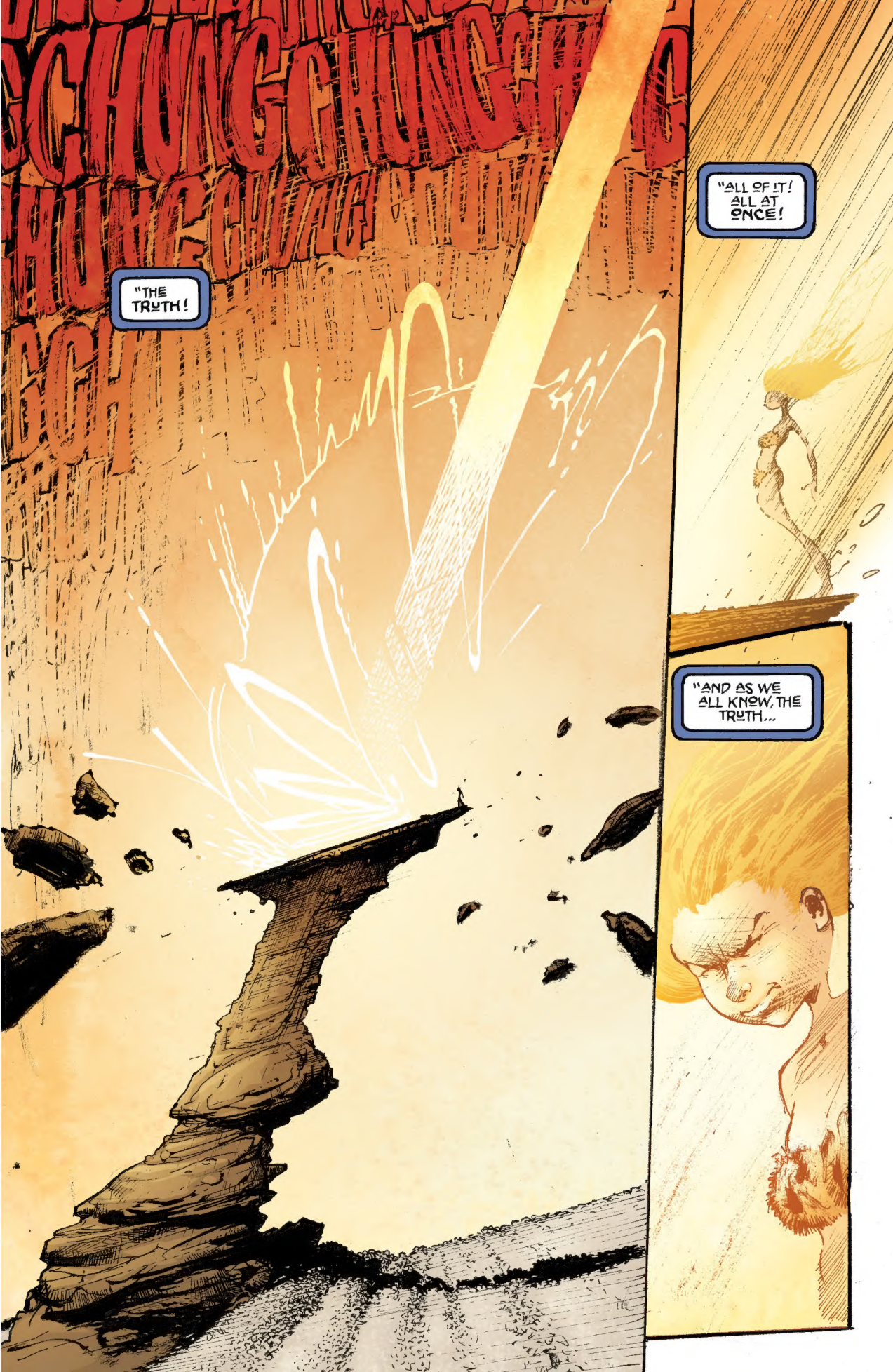
CHUNG
TAC TAC
CHUNG
TAC TAC
CHUNG
TAC TAC
CHUNG
CHUNG
WE'RE HERE, MAXX. THIS IS WHERE IT ALL STARTED!
HERMAN IS A TOOL!
GOD IS MY CO-PILOT
JESUS IS MY NAVIGATOR
MARRS STEWARDESS

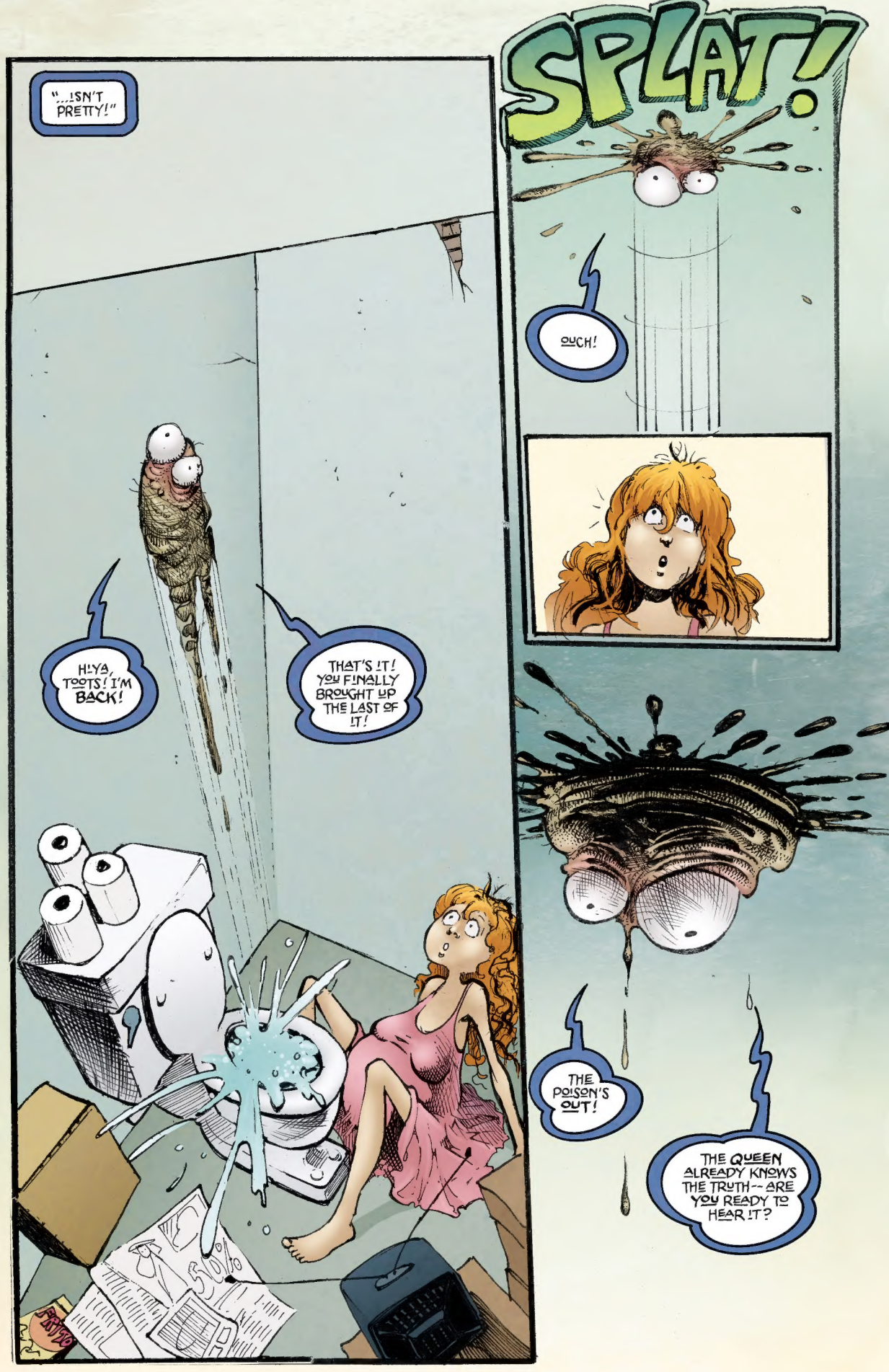

"THIS IS WHERE SOMETHING HAPPENED. WHERE YOU WERE CREATED AND JULIA WAS SPLIT INTO HERSELF, KINDA, AND THE LEOPARD QUEEN."
CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG CHUNG
SOMETHING?
SOMETHING BLUE AND WET.
I CAN'T GET A GOOD FIX ON IT, BUT THERE WAS PAIN INVOLVED.
AND GONE WAS HERE?
OH, YEAH. DEAR OLD DAD WAS HERE.
HE WAS ALIVE ALL THOSE YEARS. MOM LIED TO ME ABOUT THAT...
"...AND I DUNNO WHY."


"NO MORE THAN I KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE OUTBACK WITH THE LEOPARD QUEEN AND YOUR OTHER MAXX-SELF. BOGUS."
BUT YOU KNOW MY NAME...WHO I REALLY AM?
CHUNG
YEAH, I KNOW. YOUR REAL NAME IS DAVE
DID YOU HEAR? ARE YOU LISTENING? I SAID...
YOUR NAME IS DA—
I CAN'T HEAR, SARAH...
I DON'T...

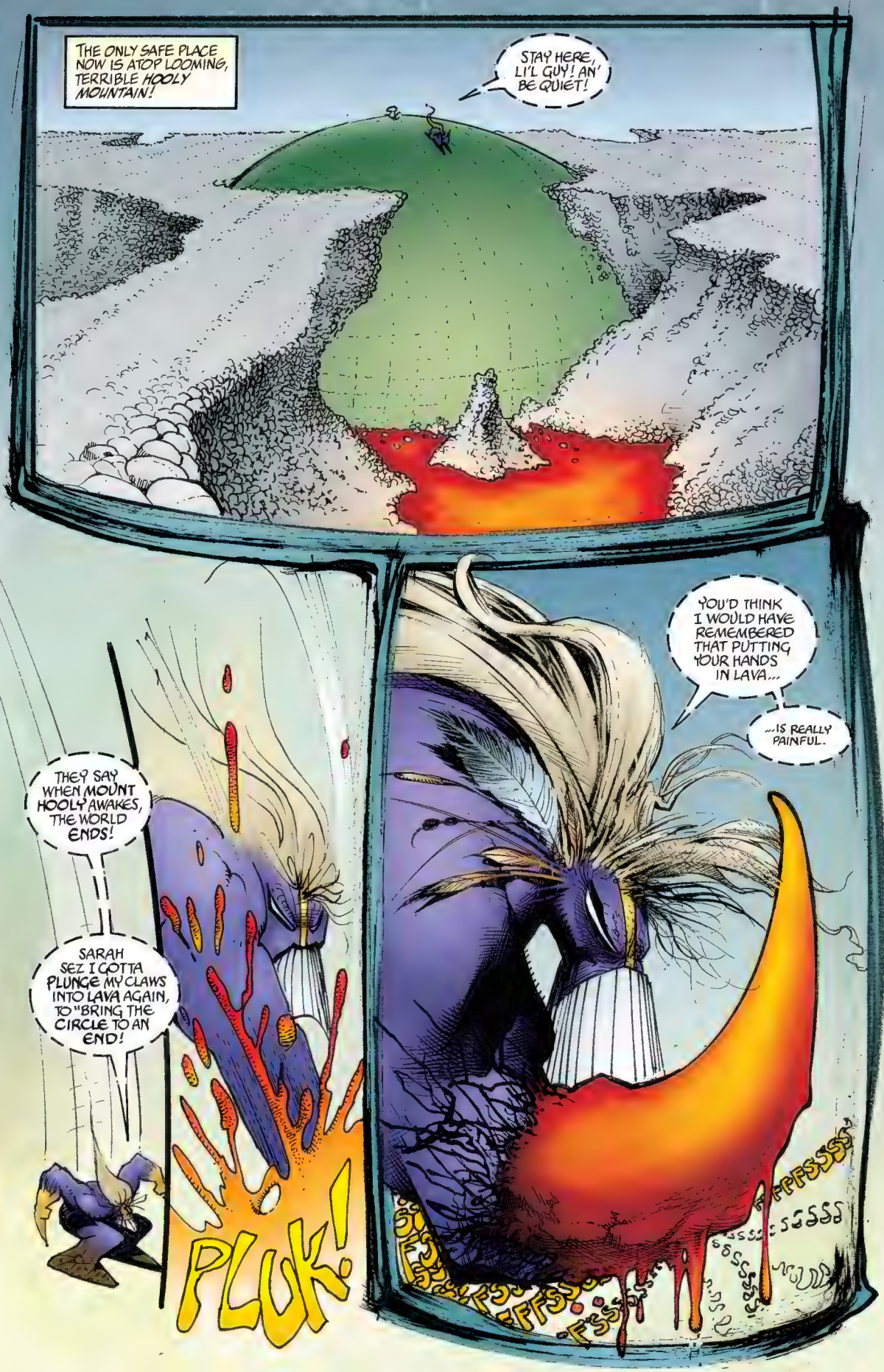

UNDERSTAND...?
OKAY, I'LL EXPLAIN IT ONE MORE TIME...
LISTEN THIS TIME.
THIS IS THE LEOPARD QUEEN'S FORTRESS HOME, WHERE WE CAME FROM.
"THIS IS THE VOLCANO, WHERE WE ARE NOW.
"WE CAME ON A PIECE OF ROCK CHOPPED OFF THE FORTRESS. IT SPEEDS UP AND GROWS AS IT CIRCLES THE VOLCANO. WE'LL BE ABLE TO RIDE HOME ON A BIG FLAT ROCK.
"BUT I MESSED UP AND CHIPPED OFF PART OF THE VOLCANO!
"NOW IT'S TRAVELLING BACK AROUND THE FORTRESS. AND IT'LL RETURN AS A HUGE BOULDER...
...AND CRUSH US!
:sigh:

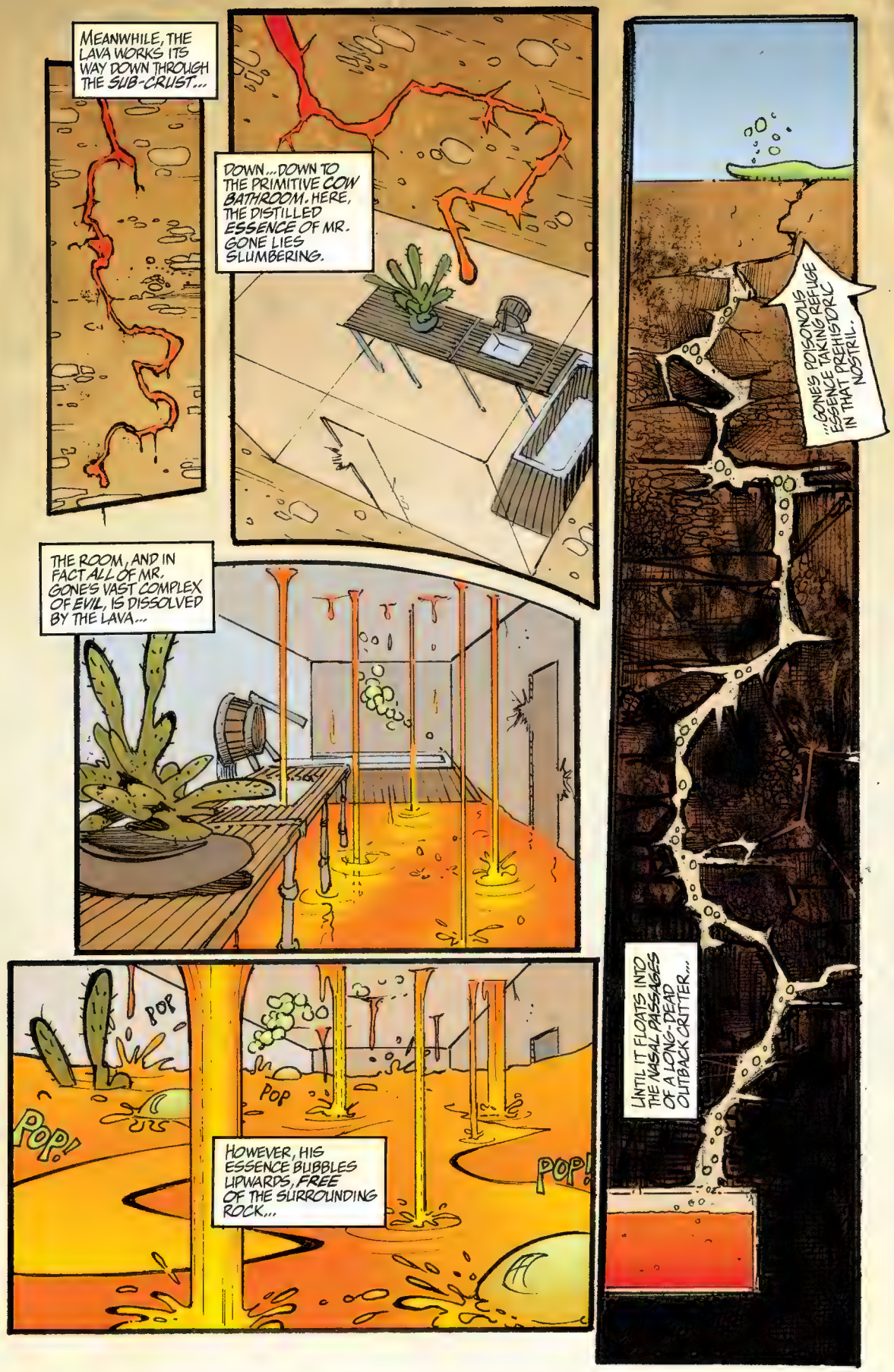

I WISH BR'ER LAPIN WOULD COME HERE.
SOMETHING IS BUBBLING UP INSIDE THE VOLCANO...
POP
I THINK IT'S...
POP
POP
POP
POP
POP

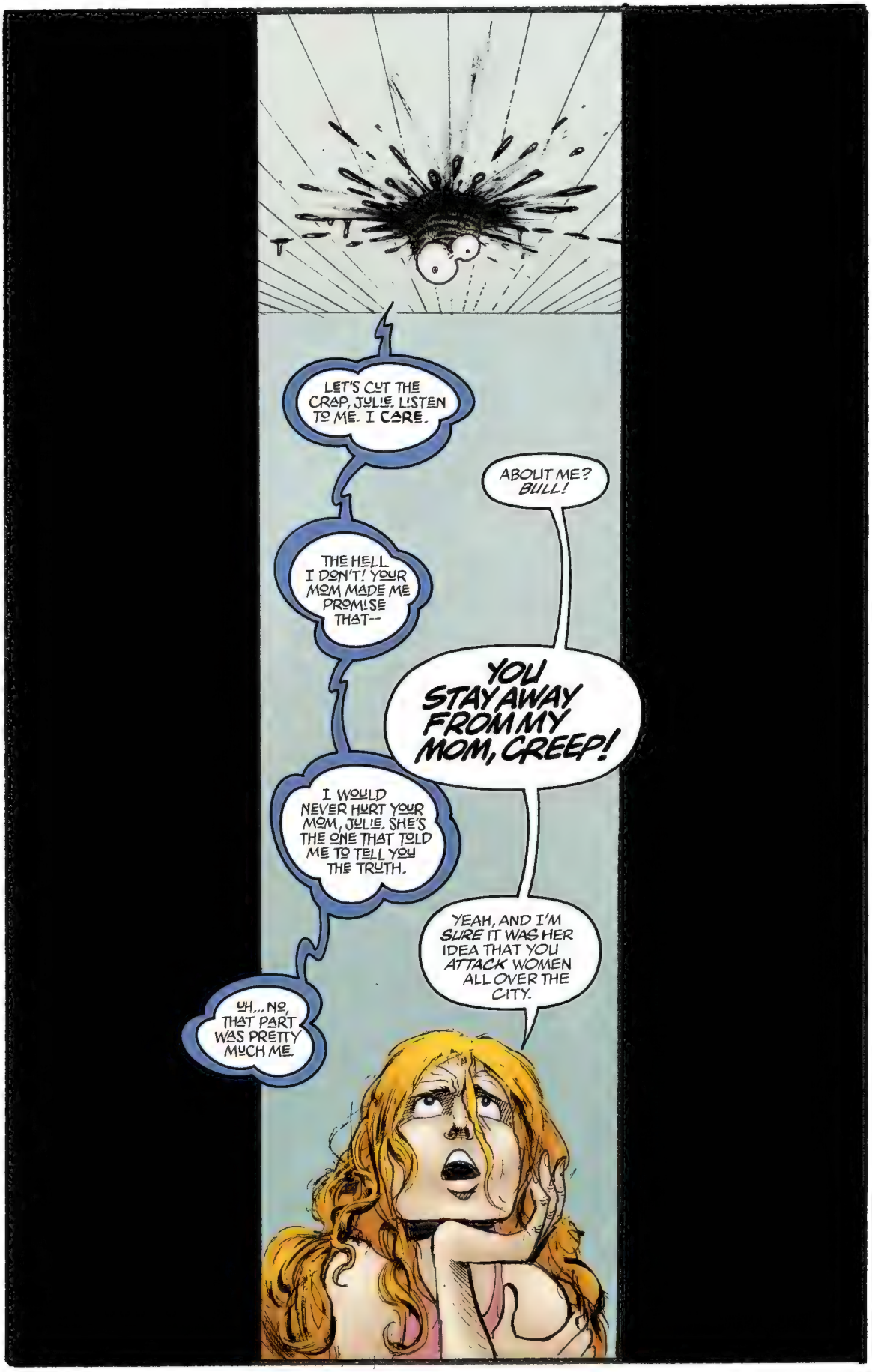

"THE TRUTH!
"ALL OF IT! ALL AT ONCE!
"AND AS WE ALL KNOW, THE TRUTH...

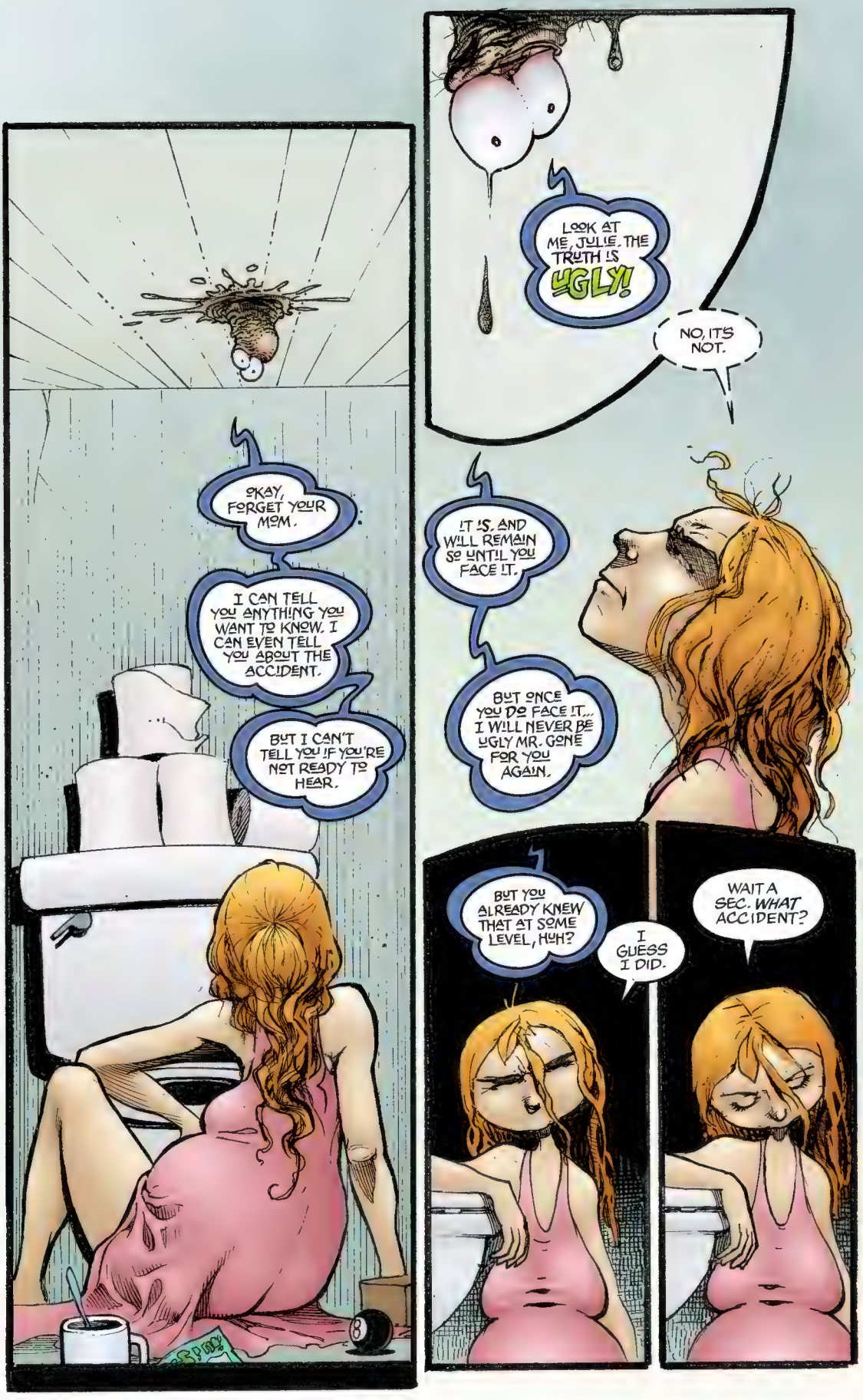

"...ISN'T PRETTY!"
SPLAT!
OUCH!
H!YA, TOOTS! I'M BACK!
THAT'S IT! YOU F!NALLY BROUGHT UP THE LAST OF IT!
THE POISON'S OUT!
THE QUEEN ALREADY KNOWS THE TRUTH-- ARE YOU READY TO HEAR IT?

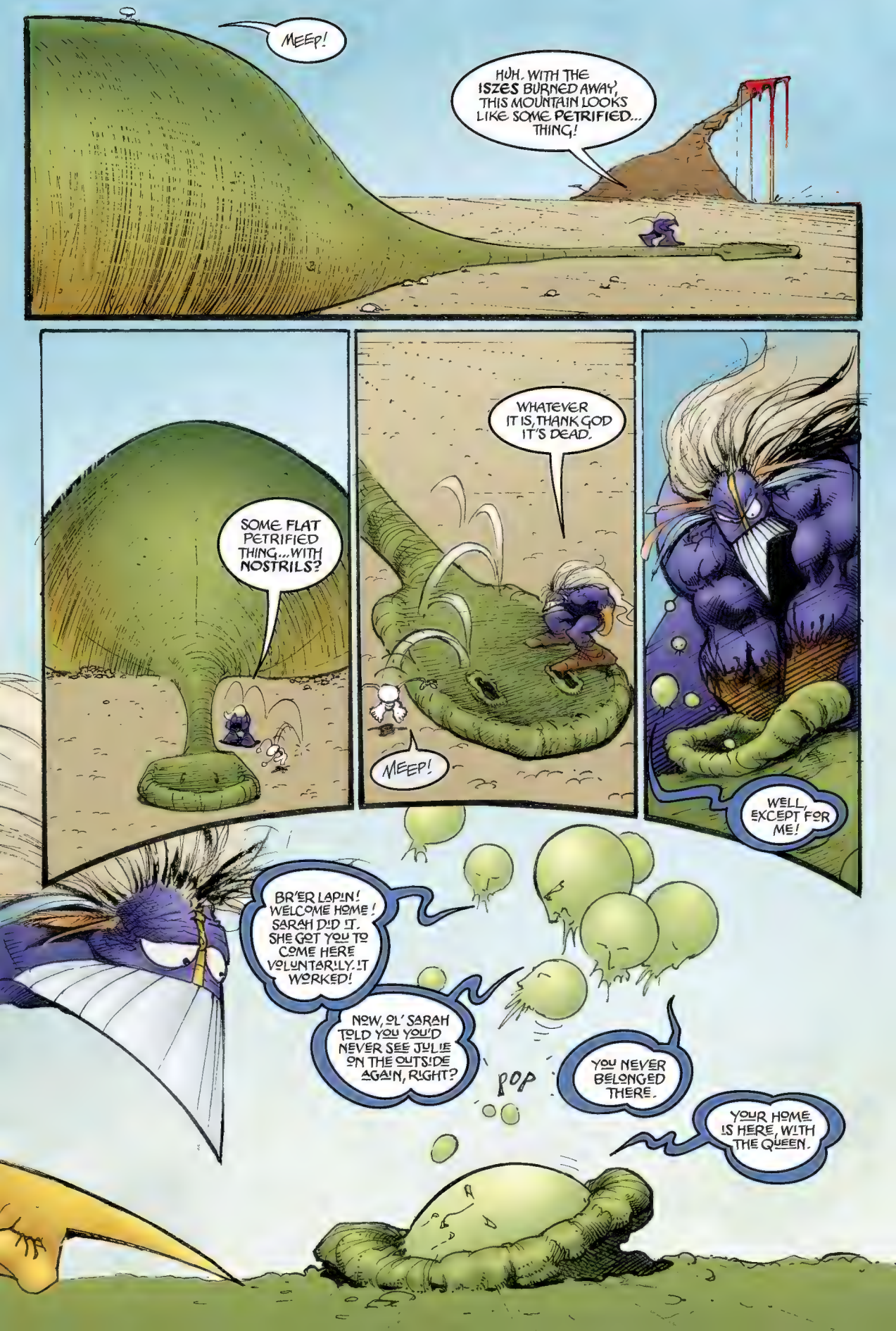
AND THE TRUTH, OR AT LEAST THE ACID LAVA, BEGINS TO EAT AWAY AT THE LAYERS OF ISZ SKULLS...
...RELEASING THE DIRE FROGS, WHO HAD BEEN TRAPPED IN THE MUD UNDERNEATH. THEY SCUTTLE FREE...
...AND LEAP TOWARDS THE SUN, FILLING THE SKY WITH FEATHERS AND WARTS!
AND STILL THE BURNING RAIN CONTINUES TO EAT AWAY THE SKULLS...
FFFSSSS
FSSSSS
...UNTIL THE STERILE GROUND BENEATH IS EXPOSED...
...AND THE LAVA COVERS ALL!


THE ONLY SAFE PLACE NOW IS ATOP LOOMING, TERRIBLE HOOLY MOUNTAIN!
STAY HERE, LI'L GUY! AN' BE QUIET!
YOU'D THINK I WOULD HAVE REMEMBERED THAT PUTTING YOUR HANDS IN LAVA...
...IS REALLY PAINFUL.
THEY SAY WHEN MOUNT HOOLY AWAKES, THE WORLD ENDS!
SARAH SEZ I GOTTA PLUNGE MY CLAWS INTO LAVA AGAIN, TO "BRING THE CIRCLE TO AN END!
PLUK!
FFFSSSS
SSSSS
FSSS

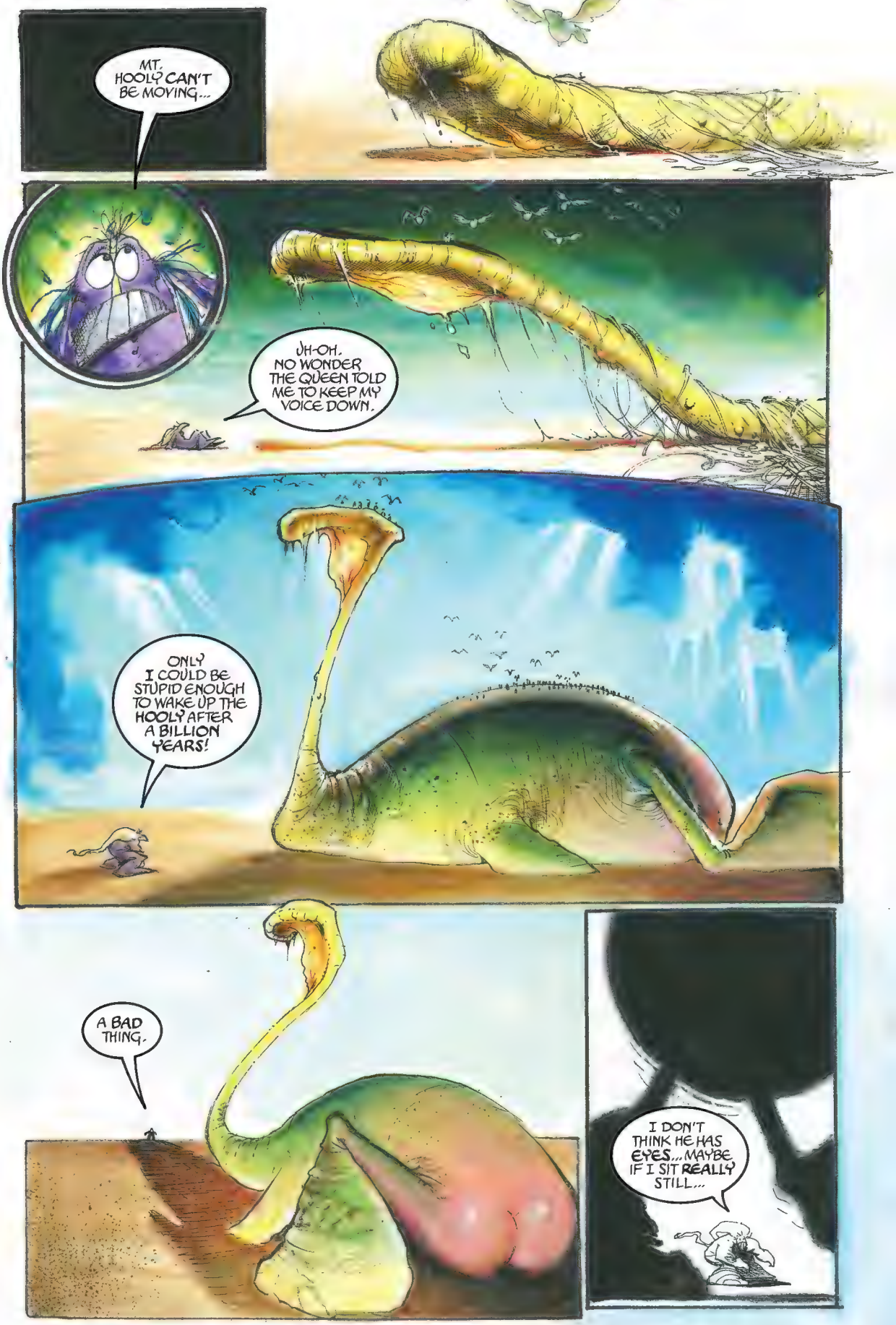

MEANWHILE, THE LAVA WORKS ITS WAY DOWN THROUGH THE SUB-CRUST...
DOWN...DOWN TO THE PRIMITIVE COW BATHROOM. HERE, THE DISTILLED ESSENCE OF MR. GONE LIES SLUMBERING.
...GONE'S POISONOUS ESSENCE TAKING REFUGE IN THAT PREHISTORIC NOSTRIL.
UNTIL IT FLOATS INTO THE NASAL PASSAGES OF A LONG-DEAD OUTBACK CRITTER...
THE ROOM, AND IN FACT ALL OF MR. GONE'S VAST COMPLEX OF EVIL, IS DISSOLVED BY THE LAVA...
HOWEVER, HIS ESSENCE BUBBLES UPWARDS, FREE OF THE SURROUNDING ROCK...
POP!
POP
POP
POP!


LET'S CUT THE CRAP, JULIE. LISTEN TO ME. I CARE.
ABOUT ME? BULL!
THE HELL I DON'T! YOUR MOM MADE ME PROMISE THAT--
YOU STAY AWAY FROM MY MOM, CREEP!
I WOULD NEVER HURT YOUR MOM, JULIE. SHE'S THE ONE THAT TOLD ME TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH.
YEAH, AND I'M SURE IT WAS HER IDEA THAT YOU ATTACK WOMEN ALL OVER THE CITY.
UH... NO, THAT PART WAS PRETTY MUCH ME.


LOOK AT ME, JULIE. THE TRUTH IS UGLY!
NO, IT'S NOT.
IT IS, AND WILL REMAIN SO UNTIL YOU FACE IT.
BUT ONCE YOU DO FACE IT... I WILL NEVER BE UGLY MR. GONE FOR YOU AGAIN.
OKAY, FORGET YOUR MOM.
I CAN TELL YOU ANYTHING YOU WANT TO KNOW. I CAN EVEN TELL YOU ABOUT THE ACCIDENT.
BUT I CAN'T TELL YOU IF YOU'RE NOT READY TO HEAR.
BUT YOU ALREADY KNEW THAT AT SOME LEVEL, HUH?
I GUESS I DID.
WAIT A SEC. WHAT ACCIDENT?

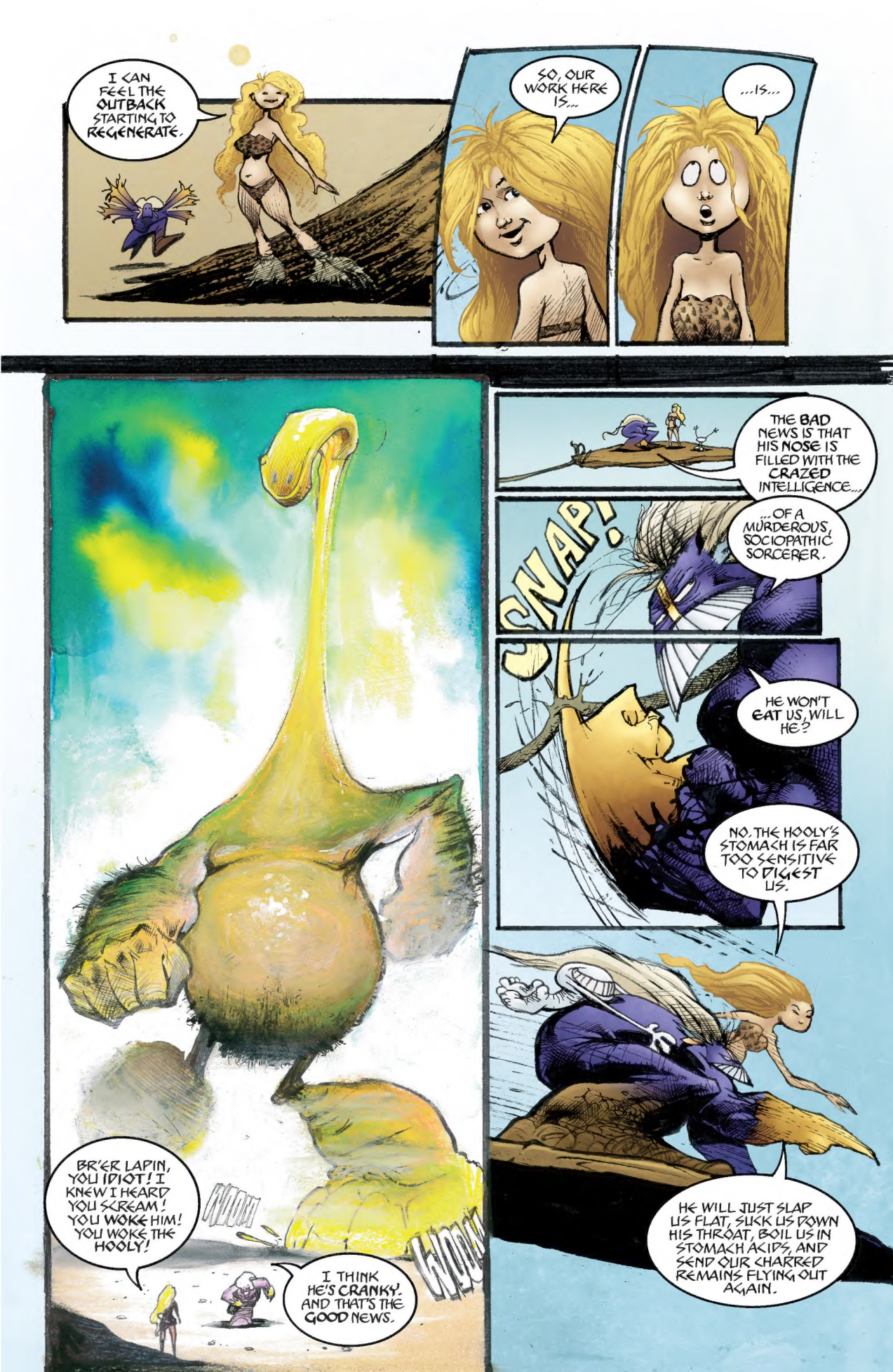

MEEP!
HUH. WITH THE ISZES BURNED AWAY, THIS MOUNTAIN LOOKS LIKE SOME PETRIFIED... THING!
SOME FLAT PETRIFIED THING...WITH NOSTRILS?
WHATEVER IT IS, THANK GOD IT'S DEAD.
MEEP!
WELL, EXCEPT FOR ME!
BR'ER LAPIN! WELCOME HOME! SARAH DID IT. SHE GOT YOU TO COME HERE VOLUNTARILY. IT WORKED!
NOW, OL' SARAH TOLD YOU YOU'D NEVER SEE JULIE ON THE OUTSIDE AGAIN, RIGHT?
POP
YOU NEVER BELONGED THERE.
YOUR HOME IS HERE, WITH THE QUEEN.

YOU KNOW THE GUY JULIE RAN OVER THAT NIGHT IN HER BUICK?
THE GUY SHE THOUGHT WAS TRYING TO...
...ATTACK HER?
WHAT ACCIDENT?
I DO REMEMBER SOMETHING... IT WAS RAINING... CAR LIGHTS... SOMEBODY COVERING ME WITH GARBAGE... OLD LAMPS... BROKEN--
MAXX, WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
AAAA


MT. HOOLY CAN'T BE MOVING...
UH-OH. NO WONDER THE QUEEN TOLD ME TO KEEP MY VOICE DOWN.
ONLY I COULD BE STUPID ENOUGH TO WAKE UP THE HOOLY AFTER A BILLION YEARS!
A BAD THING.
I DON'T THINK HE HAS EYES... MAYBE IF I SIT REALLY STILL...

EASY, HOOLY...
NICE HOOLY...
shhh...

BOOM!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
SLAP!
GREAT. I'M GONNA GET SLAPPED TO DEATH.
GOTTA GET TO THE FLYING ROCK, AND FAST!
BR'ER LAPIN, THERE YOU ARE!


I CAN FEEL THE OUTBACK STARTING TO REGENERATE.
SO, OUR WORK HERE IS...
...IS...
THE BAD NEWS IS THAT HIS NOSE IS FILLED WITH THE CRAZED INTELLIGENCE...
...OF A MURDEROUS, SOCIOPATHIC SORCERER.
SNAP!
HE WON'T EAT US, WILL HE?
NO. THE HOOLY'S STOMACH IS FAR TOO SENSITIVE TO DIGEST US.
HE WILL JUST SLAP US FLAT, SUCK US DOWN HIS THROAT, BOIL US IN STOMACH ACIDS, AND SEND OUR CHARRED REMAINS FLYING OUT AGAIN.
BR'ER LAPIN, YOU IDIOT! I KNEW I HEARD YOU SCREAM! YOU WOKE HIM! YOU WOKE THE HOOLY!
I THINK HE'S CRANKY. AND THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS.
WOOH!

SO WE'D BE DEAD, BUT NOT EATEN?
PRETTY MUCH.
:,WHEW.: